CUSTOMS IN EATING

The Tanala family rises at dawn and goes to work at once, to take advantage of the morning coolness. If any food is left from the previous night's meal, there will be a cold breakfast, but no cooking is done at this time. The first regular meal is served a little before noon and the second at sunset. Hospitality is casual and universal. Anyone who is in the house when a meal is ready partakes as a matter of course.

On all ordinary occasions the food is regularly served, not eaten from the pot. The woman of the house spreads a clean mat on the floor near the fireplace and everyone washes his hands and mouth. The woman then dishes out the rice and vegetable foods while the man divides and distributes the meat, if there is any. The husband's rice, and that of honored guests, is served separately, while the women and children eat from a common dish. In most places it is customary to place the dish of the husband or guest on a small stand of basket-work, 1½ to 2 inches high (Fig. 8, f, g, h). This symbolizes his elevation above the rest of the household.

The rice is served first. When a mound of it like hour piled on each dish, the woman flattens the top of it with the back of her rice ladle and pours on the other food. The salt and pimento mortars have been placed on the mat and each one seasons his own food with them. The head of the house is served first and no one else can begin eating until he has commenced. Each person has his own spoon and it is considered the height of ill manners to plunge the hands into the common dish. Foods which have to be eaten with the fingers, such as meat, are served separately. Simple forks, made from straight pieces of bone, are sometimes used.

The natives usually eat rapidly and almost in silence. When the food has been consumed, the hands and mouth are washed again and everyone relaxes. They lie about and chat for a half hour or more. The woman gathers up the dishes and throws the scraps of food out of the door, to the chickens. Wooden utensils are washed after each meal and hung up to dry. Spoons, after washing, are placed in small spoon-rack baskets (Fig. 12, f) or thrust through holes in a narrow strip of matting (Fig. 7, j). These spoon holders are usually hung from the center post of the house, above the fireplace. The cooking pots are rarely washed, this being considered a waste of time.

The natives have enormous appetites. A Tanala man will eat two to three times as much, by bulk, as a white laborer. They are

extremely fond of greens and sweet things of all sorts, but seem to 244
have little taste discrimination. All their cookery is simple and the
main thing they require of a meal is quantity.

Although the native food is simple and not very varied, their 196
system seems to be well balanced. There are no diseases of malnutri-
tion and I did not see a single rachitic child among natives who
adhered to their primitive diet.

ALCOHOL AND NARCOTICS

Beer, called *bendeleo*, has been used by the Tonala since pre- 273
historic times. It is usually made from a mixture of honey and water,
but the natives also employ sugar cane juice, bananas, sweet potatoes
and anything else with a high sugar content. The mixture is allowed
to stand in open jars for a few days, until it ferments, and then
drunk before it turns sour.

Rice beer was made in ancient times, but it is now obsolete and
I could not learn the process of manufacture. There are some indi-
cations that it was formerly used in ceremonies and sacrifices very
much as rum is used at the present time. It is said to have been
somewhat stronger than the modern beer.

Most of the native beer is so mild that it is impossible to become
intoxicated upon it. It is of little importance in the native diet and
there is nothing comparable to the regular beer drinking one finds
among the African tribes. Women occasionally make it for their
families, as a treat, and quantities of it are prepared for feasts, but
a household may go for weeks without having any.

The manufacture of rum (*toaka*) was probably learned from [77]
foreigners, but it has been in use for at least a hundred and fifty
years. It is distilled from beer of any sort although honey beer and
sugar cane juice are preferred because of their greater alcoholic
content. Pieces of astringent bark are usually steeped in the beer
before it is distilled, to give the rum more flavor. The still consists
of a large jar with a tight-fitting cover. In one side of the cover
there is a small hole in which a long section of bamboo, or an old
gun barrel, is inserted. The joints are sealed with clay.

Rum is regularly offered to the gods and ancestors and is also [78;]
a prescribed part of the fees paid to medicine-men, the gifts given to [431]
witnesses of adoption, blood brotherhood, etc. Good rum is as color-
less as water. At the present time, clear glass bottles are in great
demand among the Tonala, who will pay two or three times as much
for them as for colored glass. These are used as containers for cere-